



**Mr Eddie NG Hak-kim,
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Secretary for Education

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Golden Jubilee of the UGC. Since its establishment in 1965, the UGC has been collaborating closely with the Government, the UGC-funded institutions and other stakeholders, to strategise the development of Hong Kong's higher education sector in our constant strive for international excellence. Over the years, it has been playing a pivotal role in fostering a differentiated yet interlocking system which allows each institution to excel with its distinctive mission and role.

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, Hong Kong is rapidly transforming itself into a knowledge-based economy. Around the world, cities are competing for the smartest brains, attracting the most talented students, and nurturing the most competitive workforce. Hong Kong spares no effort in this race. In the past few decades, the Government has devoted tremendous amount of resources to higher education. And the UGC has been working hand in hand with the Government in steering the phenomenal growth and fruit of our investment, as well as providing expert and impartial advice on this front.

With the advent of globalisation, the world is changing, and changing at an ever accelerating speed. We have all seen the power of the opportunities of creativity and innovation in the modern world. If Hong Kong does not continue to reinvent ourselves, we risk being left behind and marginalised. Our excellent higher education sector is well placed to play a leading role in our quest for creativity. All our institutions strive to excel in innovative, problem-driven research to meet the new challenges of the knowledge-driven global environment of the 21st century.

We see the further strengthening of our higher education sector as an indispensable means to guarantee our future success, to contribute to the development of our country, and to extend the soft power of our city. With the implementation of the new four-year academic structure in the higher education sector, our institutions have designed new curricula embracing more components of general education, training in language skills, multi-disciplinary learning, overseas exposure and even some research experience. With an extra precious year of higher education which provides a broader knowledge base to support specialised learning, we are hopeful that students can receive better education and become more knowledgeable, self-assured and responsible citizens who are globally ready.

All these developments will give impetus to our continuing quest to transform Hong Kong into a knowledge-based society. As an advocate and defender of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and a guardian for the most effective use of public funds put to higher education, the UGC will surely continue to have an indispensable role to play in this process.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to congratulate the visionary former and present chairmen and members of the UGC on their tremendous accomplishments over the years. I have no doubt that the sector will go from strength to strength under the able leadership of the UGC, and I have every confidence that the UGC will continue to build on its fine legacy and scale new heights in the years to come.